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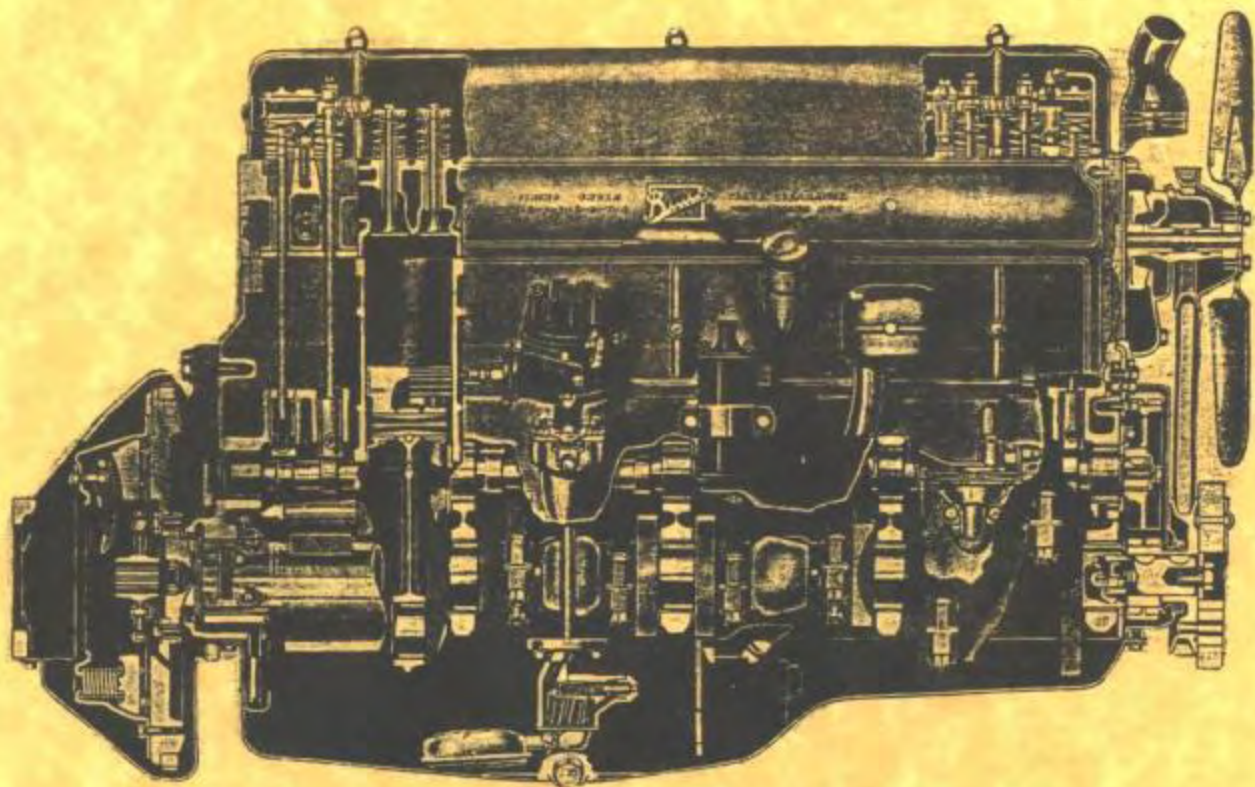
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THE TORQUE·TUBE

THE NEWS PUBLICATION FOR MEMBERS

OF THE 1937-1938 BUICK CLUB • FOUNDED 1980



Volume V • Number 1



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VOL. V • September 1986 • NO. 1

• William E. Olson, Editor •

• 842 Mission Hills Lane, Worthington, Ohio 43085 •

HELLO AGAIN

Well folks, Volume V of THE TORQUE TUBE has begun. I had a very hectic summer, including a four-week trial in West Virginia and other 'numerous miseries. I got nothing done on my car beyond a new back window; managed to get to only two shows (the BCA National at Indianapolis and Regional at Cleveland -- the latter only by luck) and didn't get any home repair projects done at all. (You see where my priorities are.)

Years ago, before the widespread use of air conditioning, when even a modest annual income seemed to go further than a big one does today, the courts were closed and business slowed up during the summer, and many people "went away" to hotels or summer houses for weeks or months. Back in 1937 and 1938 and throughout the War, when I was a little fellow, my mother and I spent the whole summer at our "cottage" in Brewster, New York, my father coming up on weekends, for his vacation, and whenever else he could. (He had a "C" gas ration rating -- essential to the war effort -- which helped.) Every day the iceman brought for our "ice-box" a big piece that had been cut from the lake the past winter and stored in sawdust within the massive pine timbers of the icehouse. Alas, the cottage and the icehouse, the fields, farms and apple trees, are long gone, and Brewster is a "bedroom" community, not a bucolic retreat. Gone, too, are the '37 Plymouth business coupe in which I rode the shelf behind the single seat, and the '41 Chevy Master DeLuxe that got us through the war. Perhaps, though, the molecules of iron, carbon, nickel and manganese that were in those cars -- and in all the 1937 and '38 Buicks that didn't make it -- are still with us somewhere, in the products of soft-recycled steel scrap.

FOUNDED BY



DAVE LEWIS

We can carry the nostalgia bit too far, I suppose, but it is pleasant to reflect on the past. I sometimes wonder what life was like for the lady in Delaware, Ohio who bought my car in 1937 and drove it through the mid-1950's. Where did it go, what country roads rolled beneath its wheels? What baskets of apples were put in its trunk in all those Septembers? What neighbors came to admire when it stood in her driveway for the first time? A more forbidding question: where will it be 49 years from today?

We cannot bring back the past, but we can seek to preserve its virtues and to understand and remember its lessons. The future remains unknowable, but we can try to insure that our followers will likewise be able to preserve, understand and remember, and will have preserved for them what has been preserved for us, so that they may participate also in the continuity of man's adventures.

In its own small way, that, in large part, is what this Club is all about.

— Bill

Cover Car

An unusual 1938 Special -- the model 44 "streamline" two-door sedan -- owned by one of our new members, Gary Stafford (#588) of Ventura, California. Gary has something even more unusual, and when I saw his application, my heart skipped a beat: at last, an existing, complete model 87, the '38 Roadmaster "streamline sport sedan." At present the Roadmaster is not photographable, but we will show it to you sooner or later. It may be the only one left in the world; only 466 were ever made and none were exported. Gary deserves one more honor: the model 44 is not black, not dark blue, not maroon, not even Corot Beige.... It's -- you guessed it! -- Raphael Green! Raphael Green was -- and is -- a sort of metallic olive that I find very attractive. Six "attaboys" to Gary Stafford!





Club News



BCA RECOGNITION

I am pleased to announce that the Board of Directors of The Buick Club of America has voted to grant recognition to our Club as a "non-affiliated Buick club." Beginning with the October 1986 issue, we will be included in the listing of "Other Buick Clubs" in the Bugle. This recognition was based not only on the "petition" and other documents submitted by your Editor but also on the past performance of the Club. I believe it clearly enhances our stature, but we must continue the performance in order to continue to deserve such enhancement. That is another way of saying that the Club does not live by the Editor's efforts alone; it will live only through the active participation of the members. So, get busy.

BCA MEMBERSHIP: DON'T FORGET

One of the conditions of recognition of our Club (and any other non-affiliated Buick club) by The Buick Club of America is that at least a majority of us must be BCA members. When I put together the documents submitted to BCA -- a rather difficult and time-consuming business for which you turkeys should be bloody grateful -- I had to go through our Roster and the latest BCA Roster and put down the names, to establish that we met this requirement. (The requirement, in my opinion, is a perfectly reasonable one.) Although this roster comparison doubtless did not yield a 100% accurate result, I was surprised to find that only about two-thirds of our members belonged to BCA. I urge all of you who are not BCA members, or who have allowed your memberships to lapse, to join or re-join forthwith. I have heard some members say that BCA is "not relevant," that it concentrates too much on post-War cars, etc. etc. Frankly, I think this is foolishness. As I have said before, there is no doubt that if BCA did not exist, this and the other Buick clubs would not either. Indeed, Dave Lewis began this Club by picking the names of '37 and '38 owners out of a BCA roster and writing to them. It worked. A "blind" ad in Hemmings would not have. So, in a very real sense, BCA is the "mother of us all." All thou wayward sons then, observe the Fifth Commandment. (Or the Fourth, if thou art Roman Catholic or Lutheran.)

A MEETING AND A MEET IN '87?

The Riviera Owners Association, which I believe has a somewhat more formal structure than we do, held an "annual meeting" on Saturday afternoon at the BCA National. It was suggested by several people that we do likewise. Good idea. So, removing my Editor's green eyeshade and donning the plumed warbonnet of Headman, Chief, Medicine Man, Sachem and Benevolent Dictator of this Club, I hereby decree that, at the 1987 BCA National in Orlando, Florida, there will be an Official Annual Meeting of the membership of this Club, at which any business



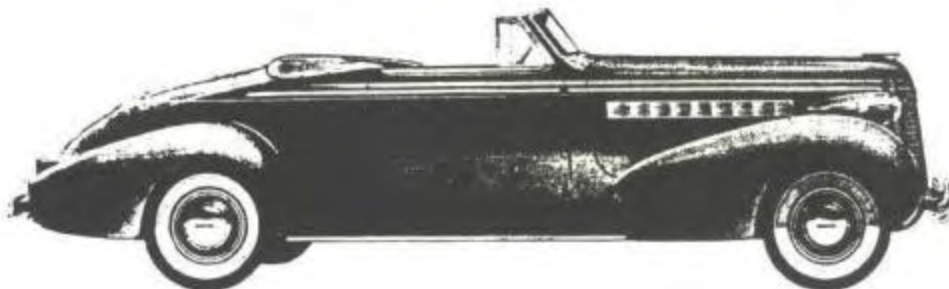
may be transacted that appears to those present to be in order. Precise time and place to be announced later. Anyone not there is likely to be voted into something. (Incidentally, it is not too early to make a hotel reservation for this now; official forms are available from your BCA Chapter or from The Peabody Orlando, 9801 International Drive, Orlando, FL 32819 -- specify the Buick Club Convention form.)

The idea of holding Our Own Club Meet (or Meets) in 1987 has been revived. Marv Rhynard (#327) and a friend in the BCA Central Michigan Chapter have offered to work on arranging a get-together in Flint for next summer or fall. Obviously, some minimum number of attendees will be required in order to get favorable hotel rates, show space, activities, etc. More on this next time. Obviously, I don't expect people from the West Coast or New England to flock to this, but there is nothing preventing members in other regions from organizing something. Don't wait for me to do it: you may wait a long time.

HAVE A QUESTION?

New members are advised, and old members reminded, that the Editor, Dave Lewis, and/or anyone else the Editor can think of who knows and will tell, will answer your questions about restoring and repairing 1937 and 1938 Buicks. (And maybe questions about other subjects, too.) At least we will try our best; only one person in the world is infallible, so far as we know, and that infallibility does not range over all subjects. Questions and answers deemed to be of general interest will be printed, and -- printed or not -- we will try to answer all polite and intelligible questions within 30 days. Please, however, observe one rule: first, make a reasonable effort, consistent with your own knowledge and abilities, to find out the answer yourself. Such reasonable efforts include, at the least, looking in the Shop Manual. (It is assumed you all have one; reprints are widely available.) There is a great amount of information in there. Over the past two years, we have received numerous questions, the answers to which were clearly set forth in one of the manuals. Too much of this gets the Editor to thinking Thoughts of Exasperation.

Happy motoring!
- Bill



Authentic... PLUS



GUY BENNETT'S 1937 CONVERTIBLE

Your Editor tooled up to the BCA Great Lakes Region meet near Cleveland, saw some nice cars, and met some nice people. Among these were cars and people we have seen in these pages before, so I decided to concentrate on Guy Bennett (#161) and his terrific 1937 Special convertible coupe.

Guy runs the Buick dealership that his father, Guy, Sr. started many years ago in Wayland, New York. This business weathered some very hard times -- in 1933 they sold exactly seven Buicks -- but by late 1936 things were looking better. Guy's convertible was originally sold by his father in December 1936 to a gentleman who wanted to give his wife something a bit different for Christmas. (Nice gift!) The car was traded back in twice. Guy first acquired it some time ago, sold it, bought it back in 1971, and then spent 13 years bringing the Special to its present beautiful condition.

Besides its overall great appeal, there are several things about this car worthy of particular note. First, the dash panel was refinished by Bennie Estes, whom we have mentioned in some of the past "Woodgrain" articles. From my inspection of this and other examples of his work, it is clear to me that Mr. Estes turns out the most authentic product. The dash in Guy's car duplicates almost exactly in color and pattern the original



'37 '40-series panels I have seen, and the illustrations in '37 sales literature. It has a real professional, "factory" look. There are numerous other nice woodgrain jobs around -- as well as, sad to say, some rather bad ones -- but as far as I am concerned, Estes is the best if one wants an authentic restoration. (Incidentally, I have this summer seen a few cars with woodgrained front ash trays. This is not correct; they were painted.)

Second, Guy showed me his spare tire compartment containing the original jack and lug wrench. (~~See~~ ~~the~~ ~~photo~~.) As many of you know, 1937 jacks did not work dreadfully well, and are now scarce because many owners trashed them. Thus it is interesting to see them whenever they appear. Although those few I had previously seen were black, Guy's set is painted a medium green, close to the color often called "apple green." He tells me that is how they looked originally. At least, that is how his set looked originally; it may be that there were variations, and "black jack" will certainly not result in points off. The lug wrench is surprisingly short -- much too short, probably, to cope with nuts tightened by today's compressed-air wrenches.

Thirdly, for all the attention shown to authentic detail in this car, it might surprise you -- as it did me -- that it is not done in a 1937 color. A few years ago, we noted the existence of a "special paint" option for both 1937 and 1938, and I probably should have mentioned this in the article on 1937 colors last fall. Guy showed me some dealer literature indicating that for 1937 the customer was charged all of \$30 for a special paint job, when ordered from the factory. He thinks that any prior-year Buick color then still regularly stocked could have been ordered, and probably any other GM color as well. So, in 1937, if one wanted, say, a Pontiac color, or a 1936 Buick color, that could be done on special order. Accordingly, Guy chose to paint his convertible in a cream color that is a close match for one of the '36 Buick shades, but quite unlike any standard '37 color. I must say it looks very nice. It is also very much in keeping with the character of the car; that is to say, it looks "right." (Guy chose to do the wheel stripes in red, and this also looks right.) Incidentally, the car was originally black, and Guy wins three Editor's "Attaboys" for not having a black car.

Guy showed me a now rather faded photo of the car, brand new, on his father's showroom floor in 1936 beneath a "Merry Christmas and Happy New Year" banner. That brings me to the last item on my list: the very attractive back window on the convertible top. This is different from the plain rectangle more often seen, but matches exactly the window shown in the 1936 photo. By the time Guy acquired the car, the original top was gone, and he searched long for a frame to duplicate the original window.





THE BACK WINDOW LOOKS LIKE THIS

All in all, this is one of the very best 1937 Buicks I have seen. The car has won several awards, and certainly shows the virtues and rewards of patience, thoroughness and attention to detail. Guy also has two other 1937 Specials (two-door and four-door plain-back sedan), plus other Buicks going back to 1910.



NEW MEMBERS



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Hands (and a Body) Across the Border



STORY & PHOTOS by ROSS McCONNELL OAKVILLE, ONTARIO

After receiving my latest issue Volume 1V #9 and reading "Harangue and Threat", I thought I had better send you some information on my 1938 McLaughlin Buick Special Trunk Back Sedan.

Being new to the hobby (or is it madness), I decided on Buicks instead of the usual Model A starter car as I remembered them as a car referred to with reverence, especially the famous ride and the straight eight.

I found my 1938 through Auto Traders, garaged in a nice clean suburban home in Hamilton. I thought all old cars were found this way. I found out differently as I progressed. The car was advertised as 95% complete, if you count the other 5% as no steering wheel, rear bumper, La Salle tail lights and a trailer light for a license light

assembly, no interior hardware and a body that a sheet metal pop riverter had taken out his frustrations on. The car had been licensed until 1969 and showed it.

After the usual tire kicking, with care and the passing of a few dollars, too many I found later, I was the proud owner of this massive black primed hulk in my driveway. Most of my neighbours had thought I had finally flipped and thought it was an oversized Ford.

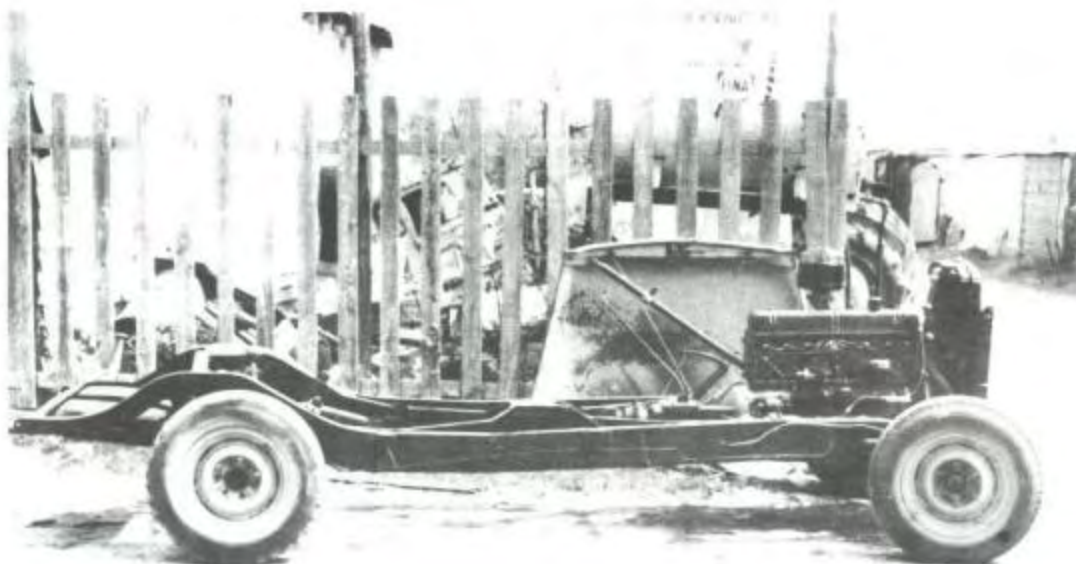


Coming out of hibernation. Previous owner has a smile on his face after being paid cash.

Two years of sweaty nut crunching, threatened revolutions from my family and a workshop and garage resembling a dark cave, caused by hours of grinding, sanding and welding, a new car in the form of a 1938 McLaughlin Buick appeared.

All heavy mechanical and body work had been farmed out, including plating and most of the upholstery. To the uninitiated, one would wonder what I did. Just finding Canadian trim parts, etc. different from the U.S. Flint Buick required the expertise of a professional expeditor and Purchasing Agent.





Original body, which had serious problems, has been discarded, and rebuilt engine and frame are ready for new U.S. Flint body.

Even a new body (courtesy of Dave Lewis), attached to my McLaughlin frame was required. The Canada Customs Officer at the U.S. -Canada Border, Niagara Falls, wished me luck with it when I hauled it across the border with the two front fenders wedged across the seats.



Sidemount wells were cut into fenders -- a scary proposition that worked out well. Now on its way to body shop for final prep and paint.



Body now painted with all detachable parts painted separately.

With only 6000 Canadian built issues in 1938, McLaughlins are fairly rare items and different enough to distinguish from the Flint Buick. It was well worth it right down to the authentic Coronation Maroon With only 50 miles "on the clock", she is brand new again. The next photos and article I send will cover the promised article on McLaughlin Buicks and the comparison to Flint Buicks.



July 1986 -- pretty much complete except for final upholstery and sidemounts.



TECHNICAL TIPS



GASOLINE. It is, of course, an essential element of our pursuits. Unfortunately, many people are having trouble with it, and the trouble spans the whole range of cars from early antiques to the latest models. Years ago, I thought that there were two kinds of gas: "regular" and "hi-test," the difference being largely how much lead was added. Well, it was in fact a bit more complicated then, and it is emphatically much more complicated now. The properties of gasoline can be varied considerably by the refiner, and numerous additives can be used. Here are some of the problem areas.

Volatility. From what I have read, it appears that gasoline is more volatile than previously: that is to say, it evaporates or vaporizes more readily. This may be a response to the increasing use of fuel injection systems, I don't know. But it is causing vapor lock and boiling even in modern cars. The real "oldies" with vacuum tanks have been especially hard hit: fuel is boiling in the tanks.

Alcohol. This is a serious problem. Many brands contain up to 10% alcohol. It can be corrosive: methanol ("wood alcohol") is far worse than ethanol ("grain alcohol"). Both are used. If you have used any of the commonly available sealers to repair your fuel tank, alcohol must be avoided. It will, over time, attack and destroy the sealer, and your fuel system will be perpetually clogging up. The problem is to find out what gas has alcohol in it. In hopes of having light shed on this, I asked Charles Jekofsky (#524) who works for Uncle Sammy in Washington, to see what he could find out. The answer, from the Department of Energy, was not encouraging. Apparently there is no federal standard for "gasahol" and no federal requirement for disclosure of alcohol content. This is left to the states. (Amazing, when one considers that there are whole rooms full of federal regulations, orders, decrees and decisions in small type, whole books of which relate to petroleum.) State regulation varies from nothing to a little. In Ohio, for example, alcohol content is required to be posted on the pump, and the use of methanol is limited to 5%. This may be the case in some other states. Look at the pump carefully, or ask the dealer. Since he is likely not to know, or may not be candid in his reply, one might also try a call to the regional headquarters of a few major oil companies. Explain right off that you are not a reporter, not an investigator, just an "old car" freak. Just from casual observations, I learned that in Ohio at least two widely-sold brands contain 10% alcohol, even the "regular": Union 76 and Super America (which is Ashland Oil). But that may not be the case elsewhere, since gasolines may vary regionally.

Solvents and Detergents. Some of these (xylene, toluol, etc.) may have adverse effects on sealers, fuel pump diaphragms, etc. They are more likely to be found in larger concentrations in unleaded gas than in "regular."

I am sorry we cannot give more helpful information. The best advice I can give is this: use only "regular" and use only major national or regional brands. If any members have information on particular brands of gasoline or particular states or regions, please write to the Editor.

USING POLYURETHANE ENAMELS. We may have inadvertently led some people astray in the 1937 Paint Colors article that appeared last year (Vol. IV, Issue 3). For most of these colors, we gave a formula for duplication using presently-available DuPont acrylic lacquer ("LUCITE") and acrylic enamel ("CENTARI") colors. Because of certain problems encountered with Sandringham Maroon, however, Lauren Matley, the author of the formulas, could not come up with an acrylic enamel match. He did get a match using "IMRON" polyurethane enamel, and we gave a formula for that. This does not mean you should paint the exterior of a car with polyurethane enamel. Neither Dave Lewis, nor Lauren Matley, nor the Editor, nor DuPont recommend this. DuPont recommends IMRON for commercial vehicles, boats, aircraft and stationary machinery. In the article referred to above, Lauren recommended it for engines and frames, and we think its use should definitely not extend beyond that. There are several reasons for this. First, it is impossible to "feather edge" or rub out. Therefore, it is impossible to spot-repair damage. While the paint itself is extremely durable, if, say, you get a dent or a ding in a fender, you cannot fill the dent, spot paint the repair, and rub out the paint to blend it in. You will need to repaint the whole fender. Moreover, because it goes on quite thick, you may have to remove the existing paint first. Polyurethane finishes are very difficult to remove. Beyond that, and perhaps even more important, it just does not look right. At least that is my opinion, and the opinion of most knowledgeable people who restore cars. DuPont describes it as having a "wet look." Great for boats and airplanes, but not for antique cars. (Likewise, the Editor disapproves of clear top coats, although some people use them. I don't think they look right.) We realize that one man's meat may be another's poison, and ultimately what you do is up to you. But that's what we think.

MYSTERY ITEM. In Volume IV, No. 8 we pictured a gadget that I suggested might have been a top-cylinder lubricator. Al McMichael says he thinks it was a knock suppressor or "octane booster." The plastic cylinder was filled with water or a water-alcohol mixture. The part at the bottom of the cylinder, which I thought might be a filter, Al suggests was a "bubbler stone" like those used in aquariums. "Vacuum pulls air through bubbler and draws the mist into the intake manifold." I have some trouble visualizing how all this would work, in part because it seems to me the time when one would need the most "boost" (heavy acceleration) is the time when manifold vacuum is lowest. But maybe I'm missing something. I do know that water injectors were used on aircraft engines in World War II and were advertised back in the 40's and 50's as a way of suppressing engine knock.

ROCKER ARM SHAFTS. Al McMichael (#319) sent us the following:

"Rocker arm shafts with grooves worn in them may be turned over and used again. New oil holes must be drilled opposite the original holes, and the original holes soldered or brazed closed. I have not tried this myself yet but was told about it at the Indianapolis show."

Thanks to Al for this tip.

NOTES ON PAINT

Elsewhere herein ("Cover Car") I noted with pleasure the successful end to my search for a Raphael Green car. In past issues we have discussed the sheer impossibility of using old formulas to create matches for old colors out of modern paints. Two formulas in my archives for Raphael Green illustrate this very well. Here they are:

DuPont

9 White
7½ Light Green
6½ Black
3 3/4 Ferrite Yellow
5 3/8 Metallic No. 2

Ditzler

8 3/4 Dark Chrome Green
11 Med. Chrome Yellow
8 Oxide Red
1 White
3½ Poly Base Standard

Could you tell that these two formulas make the same color? Would you know what "Light Green" meant to DuPont 48 years ago? We can perhaps conclude that DuPont's Black is already built into Ditzler's Dark Chrome Green. But look at the difference in the yellows. And what's the Oxide Red doing there? A comparison of other DuPont and Ditzler formulas yields the same disparity. Interesting.

Here's something even more interesting. I recently acquired a 1937 Buick-Oldsmobile-Pontiac paint chart by the Murphy Varnish Company (Newark, N.J.; Chicago; San Francisco). This chart of "Murphy Ready Mixed Lacquers" shows two 1937 Buick colors I had never heard of or seen before: "Sedge Gray" (a non-metallic dove gray) and "Marsh Brown" (a metallic dark brown). After much puzzling over this, I finally concluded that these are interior colors. The gray is about that used on the instrument cluster and the brown close to the color of the steering column, shift lever, and hard rubber steering wheels. Both have fairly simple formulas, in case anybody wants to try them.

Sedge Gray

24 White
3 Burnt Umber
2 Lamp Black
1½ Medium Yellow
½ Indian Red

Marsh Brown

10 Intense Black
10 Indian Red
7½ Burnt Umber
5 Metallic



Gimme a **LIGHT**

TRIPPE LIGHTS

Several of our new members have asked about Trippe lights: what are they? In brief, Trippe lights are the "kings" of the auxiliary driving lamps sold in the 1920's and 1930's. They were made by the Trippe Lamp Company of Chicago. (I believe the company is still in business making specialty lamps, but so far as I know, no automotive products.) Trippe lights are easily identified. They came in two general size ranges, Junior and Senior, with matching brackets. Early models had built-in levels; it is my understanding, however, that the levels were not found on late 1930's models. The distinguishing feature of Trippe lights is a metal disc behind the center of the glass lens; this disc is orange and blue and reads "Trippe Safety Light." On those I have examined closely, there is also at the bottom of the glass lens raised lettering reading "Trippe Speed Light."

Trippe lights were expensive and well-made, and people tended to keep them and transfer their sets from car to car. Accordingly, quite a few have survived. Restored pairs are much sought after and can be rather costly.

Headlights in the 1930's left something to be desired in terms of illumination, for anything beyond town driving at moderate speeds. The Trippe lights were primarily intended to provide extra long-range illumination for high-speed running on unlighted roads. Other brands of auxiliary driving lamps were also sold. The "official" General Motors line of "factory-approved" accessory lamps were sold under the trade name "Guide" (see Vol. III, Issue 3, p. 16). Several other brands of "after-market" lights were also available.

FOG LAMPS

Fog lights were of course intended to penetrate thick, moisture-laden air, which tends to reflect ordinary light back to its source. Amber or yellow light was considered to penetrate better than white light, although it is generally thought today that the design of the lens and the placement of the lamp (as low as possible) are more important than color. Fog lamps thus had amber lenses. Besides the "Guide" lamps mentioned above, many brands of fog lamps were sold. In general, the earlier



fog lamps tended to have a more pointed or bullet-shaped body than those sold in the 1940's and 1950's, which were more rounded in back. The reproduction "Unity" lamps sold by several suppliers today are thus probably more appropriate for 1940's cars, although they look nice and -- in my judgment, anyway -- there is nothing particularly wrong with using them.



"Senior" Trippe Lights decorate the fronts of two handsome autos: the 1938 Century owned by Bob Pipkin (#076) of Salem, Oregon, and from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the 1937 Special owned by Jim O'Connor (#534).





Reproduction "Unity" fog lamp on Editor's car: more 1940's in looks, but not bad nevertheless.

HEADLIGHT REFLECTORS

As we observed above, 1930's headlights were not as effective as modern sealed-beam lamps. Some people have tried to improve this situation by converting to 12-volt electrical systems, with or without sealed-beam lights. And many people who were still using 1930's cars in the 40's and 50's converted to 6-volt sealed-beams then. (While the Editor is personally not too keen on these conversions, we hope to have some articles on doing them in the future.) It is my opinion that much of the difficulty with using original headlights today results from deteriorated reflectors or ineffectively-restored reflectors. The reflector is very important in lamp design. (If you doubt this, rig up two "D" batteries in series with a flashlight bulb outside the flashlight body and see how much illumination you get.)

Reflectors were originally silvered. Although newly-plated and polished silver reflects light excellently, as we all know it tarnishes in contact with the atmosphere, decreasing reflectance substantially. If the tarnish is removed by polishing, or in mild cases cleaning with ammonia, the original reflectance may be restored. However, this needs doing frequently, and eventually the silver will be worn through. Besides, who wants to take his headlights apart every month?

Re-silvering reflectors is difficult and expensive, and, in any case, new silver would last no better than the old. Some people have thus plated reflectors with chrome or nickel. This is not satisfactory. While chrome in particular does not tarnish, its blue-black "color" absorbs about 35% of the light from the bulb, versus about 5% for newly-polished silver. Not good enough. Nickel is worse.



In the late 1930's a method was developed to vacuum-deposit aluminum on glass. This produced a highly-reflective surface, but aluminum surfaces oxidize rapidly. However, by surrounding the aluminum reflector and lamp filament with a sealed glass container filled with inert gas, the oxidation problem was solved. Result: the "sealed-beam" lamp, first appearing on Buicks in 1940.

A few years ago, a company in Oregon developed a method of vacuum-depositing aluminum on original reflectors and sealing the aluminum with an extremely thin layer of glass. This is said to result in a reflectance of 92% (approximately equal to new silver) which does not decrease with age. The Editor has heard some very good reports about this system, and members are encouraged to try it before resorting to more drastic methods. It will work for auxiliary lamps as well as for headlights. Write (SASE) or call for more information.

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(Some of the foregoing was adapted from an article by Mr. William Atwood, President of UVIRA, that appeared in the August 1984 Skinned Knuckles.)

Decal Sale!

There are perhaps ²⁵~~100~~ Club decals left from the original run in 1984. They are of excellent quality. Since they have sold rather slowly over the past 18 months, it may be a while before I order another run. Get a few while they last. Order from Editor; all proceeds go to the Club.



\$1.00 each postpaid;
3 for \$2; 6 for \$4;
8 for \$5; 10 for \$6.

Repair of Fuel Tank Sending Units



ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY PAUL CULP

In our pursuit of happiness with antique autos, we come to tolerate a lot of annoyances. One of those is a gas gauge that does not work. With summer touring ahead and a need for the trunk space taken up by my five-gallon gas can, however, I decided the time had come for an accurate fuel gauge.

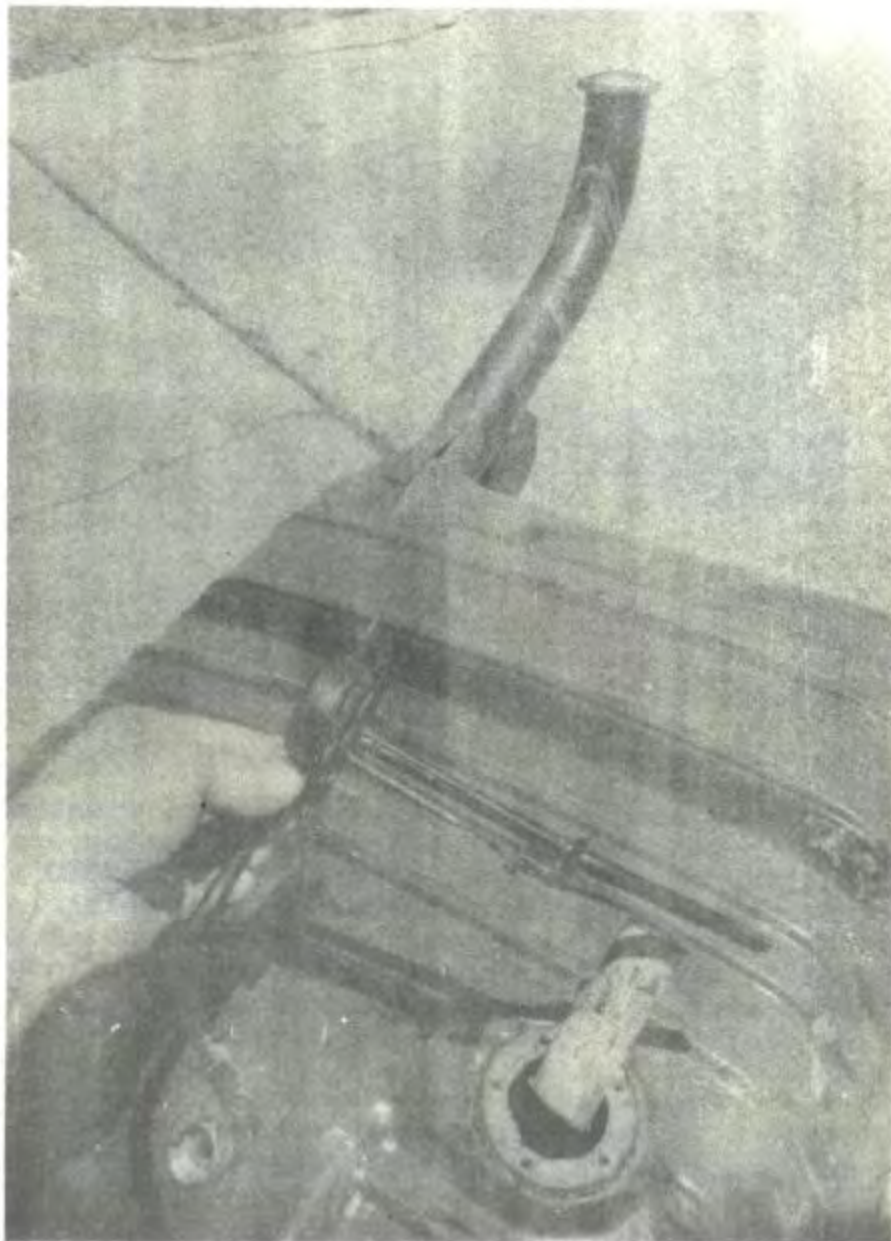
About a year ago I had cleaned and sealed the fuel tank. I had also installed two Model A Ford cork floats which, together, replace the original float quite nicely. (See Volume IV, Issue 4, Technical Tips.) Before installing the sending unit, I checked its function with the instrument board and all seemed OK. So, back went the tank under the car. However, as I filled the tank one gallon at a time and noted the position of the gauge, I realized something was wrong. At six gallons, the needle shot up to "FULL." Needless to say, after all that work I did not feel the least bit like taking the tank out again. I indulged myself in one of those vain hopes: maybe it will cure itself. Needless also to say, it didn't.

After a year of guessing about gas mileage, I decided it was time for Phase Two. The tank was drained, and I then jacked up the rear of the car to about a 20-degree angle and put two strands under the frame, leaving my floor jack under the rear axle. I proceeded to remove the tank, disconnecting the sender wire. (You'll probably need an offset wrench, and maybe some others.)



Now I removed the sending unit from the tank. By running jumper wires, I could fluctuate the sender (i.e. move the float up and down) and watch the response on the instrument board. Since things were still erratic, it was time to disassemble the sender.

From the photos one can see how the sending unit is put together. The float operates a gear drive, which turns a shaft, on the end of which is the movable contact brush of a coil rheostat. The brush is held against the coil by a spring. As fuel is added to the tank, the float rises. This moves the contact along the coil, introducing resistance into the circuit. The amount of resistance determines the position of the indicating pointer in the gauge. (See fuller description in the Shop Manuals. It may be noted that if the circuit is broken -- e.g. the wire disconnected from the unit or cut through -- the gauge will read "Full" continuously.) GM (AC Spark Plug) used brass grommet type line-up bushings to keep the two halves of the rheostat housing in alignment. These are like brass tubes with both ends peened over. I removed some of the brass on one side only using the "chisel and file method." This allowed me to open the rheostat housing.

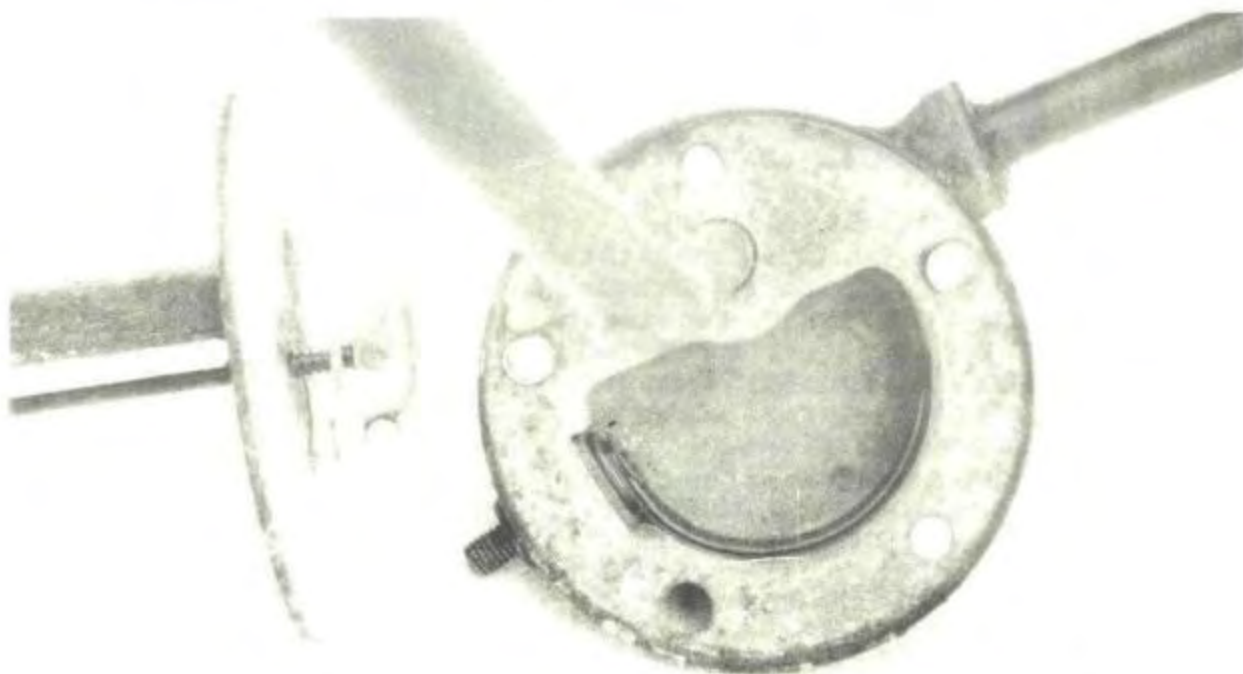


I found that the rheostat was contaminated with rust particles, which apparently varied the resistance randomly and caused the erratic gauge readings. I cleaned out all the rust and cleaned the coil with a small sharp tool and a fine wire brush. (Editor's Note: "Gumout" spray, which I swear by, or electrical contact spray cleaner, would also help here.) The contact brush had developed a flat spot from wear, so I recreated the proper dome shape with a needle file and emery paper, to insure good contact with the coil. (One can also vary the gauge readings by twisting the contact brush in a vise, but this is tricky and in general it is advisable not to disturb the position of the brush on the shaft.)

At this point I temporarily assembled the unit and checked it out using the jumper wires as previously described. It responded normally over the entire range, so it was time to put everything back in the car.



TOP PHOTO shows sending unit parts together: float on left; gear drive in center; rheostat housing at bottom center. (The pipes are the fuel line, dummy.) BOTTOM PHOTO shows contact brush on shaft at left; coil of rheostat along semi-circular side of housing interior. Wire to dash gauge fastens to stud at left center of housing. Slide base of housing over fuel intake pipe to remove.



Since I had not destroyed the brass grommets, I found I could rework them enough to use again, and they realigned the two halves of the housing on reassembly. I used a judicious amount of "Permatex" aviation-type gasket material between the halves also. (Be careful not to overdo this.) I also used this material between the sender and the top of the tank along the five screw holes. (Editor's Note: Originally, there was a cork gasket in this position. You can make a new cork gasket if you have a sharp knife and a set of punches. Many people seem to balk at making gaskets, but I do it all the time. Especially here, where it's out of sight, it doesn't matter if you don't get it perfect. But, whatever you do, remember: no silicone. You can also make new brass grommets, rather than salvage the old ones as Paul did. A tool, similar to pliers, for setting the grommets can be found in most large hardware stores. The trick is to get grommets of the right size. Dave Lewis tells me he once found them at a shoe rebuilding shop: the shoe men use them for lacing eyelets on heavy shoes and work boots. How's that for ingenuity?) Put the tank with sender back in the car, reconnect the fuel line, and you're all done. (Editor's Note Again: Getting the tank out and back in, especially on 1937 models, can be tricky. If you get stuck, as I once did, take off the whole fender; this is not necessary in theory, but it may be easier in practice. Be absolutely certain the tank is grounded to the frame; a separate ground wire is not a bad idea.)

This project requires nothing more than a basic knowledge of electrical circuits, a reasonable complement of tools, and a bit of effort, but be sure before you start that you have enough room to work. It rewarded me with an accurate fuel gauge and an extra five-gallon gas can. For safety reasons, I'm pleased to see that can in the garage instead of in my car trunk.

Well, folks, Paul Culp has done it again: a great article and great photos on a subject that may never before have been covered in such depth. Did you know what a sending unit looked like inside? How to fix one? I didn't. Paul is hereby named Master of Obscure Repairs. But what about everybody else? Is there not a technical tip among you? Not a photographer? Is Paul the only member who ever thinks of me? Let's get with it!

-Bill



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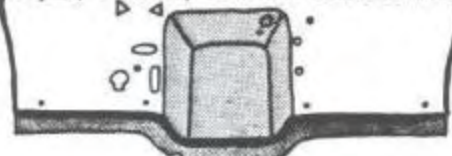
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We all know that car manufacturers put together a great deal of material for their dealers and the dealers' sales personnel to use in explaining the cars, taking orders and in general making their "pitch." This practice is almost as old as the automobile itself.

In 1938 Buick supplied a "Facts Book" which, together with some other material, was contained in a leather folder. The book was roughly 4½ x 6 inches, a size that could be slipped into a jacket pocket. (Everyone wore suits and ties in those days, remember? Even the mechanics wore little bow ties.) It had a thumb index, dividing the book into several sections.

Earlier this year, our dear friend Doug Nelson (#051) found a copy of the Facts Book in excellent condition, and generously lent it to the Editor to copy. On the following pages we present a brief excerpt from the book. More excerpts will appear in future issues. Thanks, Doug.

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New Engineering in the 1938 Buick

By C. A. CHATNE, Chief Engineer

As an engineer, experience has taught me that there is only one way to make a report—to make it factual and to the point.

In reporting the results of our efforts in the development of the 1938 models, I would like to bring out the fact that only proven Buick Engineering principles could have contributed the foundation for the new and exclusive engineering advances to be found in the new Buicks.

It was determined years ago that the Buick engine should be Valve-in-Head because of the superior performance it provides, and the selection of the Torque Tube type of drive has been proven worthy of retention since first adopted.

The point of our engineering story this year centers in these two Buick principles—which facilitated the adoption of our 1938 features—and they in turn further establish the soundness of these principles. There you have the background of the 1938 Buick automobiles. Now let us see what these features are.

We designed and developed for the Buick Valve-in-Head straight-eight engine an entirely new method of increasing the effectiveness of fuel in the combustion chamber—by concentrating the charge closer to the spark—resulting in controlled combustion. I'll not try to give an explanation here since there is a whole section later in this book, on the "Turbulator Piston" in the "Buick Dynafash Engine."

The engine weighs and displaces no more than the 1937 Buick engine yet it develops more horsepower, and repeated tests have proven that the cars are faster on the pick-up, consume less gasoline, and perform better in every way.

We determined to take full advantage of the Torque Tube Drive principle to improve those riding qualities of which we were already justifiably proud. The result is Buick Torque-Free Springing—which you can appreciate as much by seeing, as you can by riding.

Coil springs similar to those in front, now displace the customary heavy leaf-type springs, covers and shackles.

• 3 •

Now with coil springs on the rear as well as front an uniformly balanced ride is secured which is better controlled, with freedom from annoying bouncing, skidding, and rear end lift, providing at the same time longer rear tire life.

This is a feature that only the 1938 Buick can provide—for without the stability of a Torque Tube Drive, rear leaf springs cannot as successfully be replaced with the more flexible coil springs.

Because I mention these two features first—the Dynafash Engine and Torque-Free Springing—and dwell on them this way, don't think that we were any less aggressive in our development work on the rest of this new automobile.

We abused every inch of the 1937 Buick—literally tore it to pieces from front bumper to gas tank—looking for anything and everything that might possibly be improved.

We tracked down the sources of the slightest vibrations and drumming sounds, then developed a means of eliminating them—with an entirely new method of joining the body and frame, called SILENT ZONE MOUNTING.

Along with our work on the new Dynafash Engine, we developed a new combined Automatic Choke and Starter Switch, engineered a smoother clutch and improved the transmission. We augmented the Torque-Free Springing's improved riding qualities with newly designed direct-acting shock absorbers.

Many new comfort and convenience features have been added, scientifically redesigned seat paddings, built-in defrosters, a simplified hand brake lever, and new sealing around doors and windows to eliminate dust and drafts.

And finally, we enriched the sweep and flow of our styling with a completely new speed-line front assembly, longer and more massive hood louvers, reshaped front fenders, redesigned wheels—an all-around refinement over our outstanding 1937 style.

* * *

These then are the engineering high-spots of the 1938 Buick—but that's all they are—just the high-spots. The full story of the 1938 Buick is in the pages which follow.

We of the Engineering Department heartily believe that the features and improvements to be found in the 1938 Buick give assurance of the continued high standard of value established by its predecessors.

• 4 •

Buick's Famous Sealed Chassis

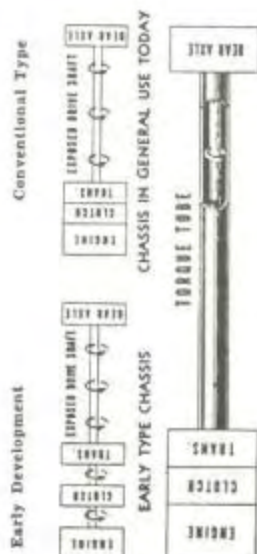
Buick engineers have not only built into the 1938 cars the finest type of chassis construction used today, but they have also taken utmost pains to see that every moving part is securely sealed to keep out dust, dirt and water — which are recognized as great enemies of machinery and fine working parts.

Below are illustrations showing the development of the sealed chassis from the very beginning to the way we now find it on today's Buick.

In the early days of the industry, manufacturers built their chassis with the engine, clutch, transmission and rear axle as separate assemblies. These separate units were connected by means of exposed shafts.

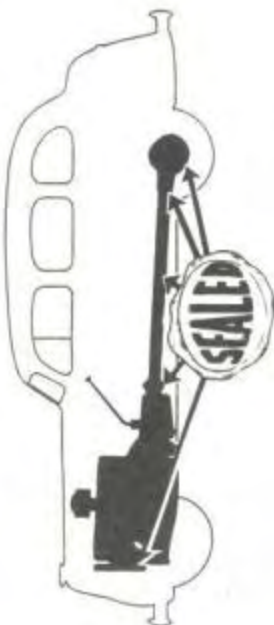
As the years went by, manufacturers saw that an improvement could be made by combining the engine, clutch, and transmission into one unit. This assembly was soon recognized as the finest in the industry and is now used by practically all manufacturers, as it gives greater smoothness, durability and, most important of all, seals and protects this mechanism from mud, dust and water.

However, Buick engineers saw where an additional advantage could be gained and have gone one step further, sealing the



The Buick Sealed Chassis

• 52 •



Buick chassis is sealed from the fan to rear wheels from dust, dirt and water

remaining exposed parts from the transmission to the rear axle with the Torque Tube. It acts as the final connecting link in sealing the chassis from the fan to the rear wheels.

In addition to sealing the backbone of its mechanism through the Torque Tube as just described, Buick protects countless other parts from dust and dirt — the Air Cleaner, the Crankcase Vent-



Conventional car with propeller shaft and universal joints exposed

lator, seal the engine from dust and dirt, while the Cooling System, Steering Connections, Wheel Bearings, all four brakes are completely sealed from elements such as dust, snow, dirt, or water. To the buyer of a Buick, this style of sealing means unequalled dependability and long life.

• 53 •

1938 BUICK FRAMES

The X-type center cross member frames for 1938 have been completely redesigned, combining new methods of obtaining a rugged structure with minimum weight. The same type of general construction is used in each of the frames, but with small variations to compensate for the difference in sizes. Their design affords effective relief from torsional, or twisting, strains in the car, and they are extremely resistant to weaving forces on sharp or sudden turns. The beam strength, or freedom from bending, has been considerably increased. Each section in each frame is designed to carry a much greater load than that expected of it, which makes for rugged construction and safety in a unit which is the foundation on which all other units depend for perfect alignment. Welding is used throughout to join the several parts together, making of the frame, for all practical purposes, a single unit.

Here is another new feature of the 1938 Buicks that is well worth your careful review and study. So turn to page 79 in the "OTHER NEW FEATURES" section, where this new frame construction and its advantages are fully described.

CHASSIS LUBRICATION

On all 1938 Buicks a pressure lubrication system is used, with fittings conveniently located. This positive type of lubrication has proved itself to be most efficient because it definitely assures that all points requiring lubrication can be easily reached and supplied by the attendant.

BALANCED TUBULAR PROPELLER SHAFT

Tubular propeller shafts are used on all models. They are large in diameter and are built with sufficient strength to eliminate any possibility of twisting and whipping. Each propeller shaft is carefully balanced on a highly sensitive balancing machine in order to insure vibrationless operation.

UNIT MOUNTING OF RADIATOR, FRONT FENDERS AND HEADLAMPS

The front fenders, radiator and headlamps are all mounted as a unit on the center of the iron frame cross member. This construction eliminates fender and radiator shake and permits these parts to move as a unit. The radiator is fastened to the dash by panels which are securely bolted in place.

• 54 •

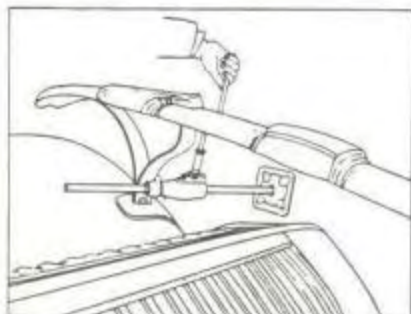


Fig. 1

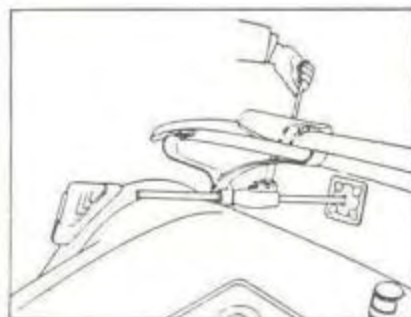


Fig. 2

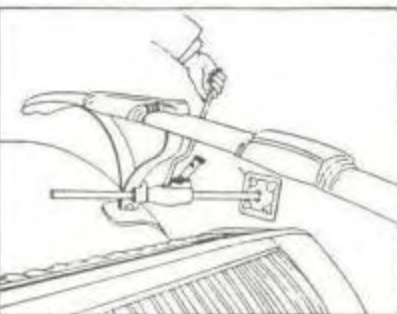


Fig. 3

NEW JACK

Changing tires is a simple matter for a Buick owner.

Figs. 1 and 2 show the method of raising the wheel from the ground by placing the jack under the bumper inner bars and moving the handle up and down.

To lower, simply insert end of jack handle in opening as shown in Fig. 3. Pressing downward gently, lowers the car slowly. Increasing the pressure will cause the car to lower more rapidly.

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cover-new, \$5; 4 new wheel cylinder kits-1 1/16", \$10; 3 hub caps,
1 @ \$5, 2 @ \$20 each; 2 rubber covers for Stromberg AA-1 choke,
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